



**VOTE**  
TUESDAY  
AUGUST 4  
2020

# OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX

## MILLAGE PROPOSAL QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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# OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A

## SECTION I: PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS IN OUR COMMUNITY

### 1. WHY DO WE NEED A NEW JAIL?

The Otsego County jail is undersized for a county of our size. The current facility, built in 1967, contains 34 beds that serve roughly 25,000 people living and working in Otsego County. This equals 1.3 beds per thousand people. The average county jail size in Michigan is 3.5 beds per thousand people. On a bed-per-thousand-people basis, 97% of all jails in the Michigan are larger than Otsego County's jail.\*

The lack of jail space prevents law enforcement from doing their job effectively:

- Currently, there are 1,100 outstanding warrants\* that cannot be acted upon because there is no space in our jail. Criminals are instead arrested, booked, and released.
- In addition, there is over \$4 million in unpaid child support\* that is owed to custodial parents in Otsego County. We do not have the ability to impose – or even threaten – consequences for non-payment because of jail overcrowding.
- S.A.N.E. (regional drug task force agency) statistics show that drug crimes in Otsego County have risen steadily, and now the majority of drug crimes in S.A.N.E.'s northern Michigan region originate in Otsego County.\* It is believed that this in large part is due to a lack of law enforcement's ability to impose punishment.

Jail overcrowding has been mitigated with programs such as the Sheriff's Department work camp and drug court; however, these programs are currently operating at maximum capacity. Additionally, only those convicted of non-violent misdemeanors are eligible for work camp and drug court. Accordingly, none of the current inmates are eligible for these programs.

Having exhausted all other options, a new jail truly is the only solution to our problem.

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

### 2. WHERE IS THE JAIL CURRENTLY?

The 34-bed Otsego County jail is in the downtown County Building. Its entrance is at the south end of the pavilion on Court Street.

### 3. WHY IS A JAIL A COUNTY ISSUE?

Counties are mandated by state statute to provide a jail. It is a legal obligation of each county in Michigan. All 83 counties in Michigan have a jail facility.

### 4. ARE THERE ANY JAILS IN NORTHERN MICHIGAN THAT HAVE SMALLER JAILS THAN OTSEGO COUNTY'S?

No. Based on population, Otsego County's jail is the 3rd smallest jail in the state, with only Washtenaw and Wayne counties behind us. The average jail in northern Michigan (excluding Otsego County) contains 3.5 beds per thousand people.\*

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

### 5. HOW DOES HAVING AN UNDERSIZED JAIL AFFECT THE COUNTY'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM?

Law enforcement officials aren't the only ones affected by the lack of jail space.

The entire criminal justice system in the county is impacted. For example:

- Judges are forced to decide which inmates must be released early due to chronic overcrowding.
- The county's prosecuting attorney has also expressed frustration, stating that often people charged with crimes do not even show up to court because there is no punishment for failing to appear.
- Probation violators face no punishment for not complying with their sentences.

## OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A

### **SECTION II: CHALLENGES OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM FACES**

#### **6. IN WHAT WAY WOULD THE JAIL POPULATION CHANGE WITH A BIGGER FACILITY?**

All current Otsego County jail inmates are felons or assaultive/violent misdemeanants. We rarely house anyone in the jail for “less serious” crimes. All 34 beds of our jail are occupied by people who have committed very serious violent and/or drug crimes.

Because all jail beds are filled with serious offenders, we have no available jail beds to use as a deterrent for probation violators, persons wanted on warrants, certain drunk driving offenses, domestic violence assaults, PPO violations, delinquent child support payments, etc. At this time, there is no way to hold them accountable, and thereby offer increased protection to citizens.

#### **7. HOW MANY TOTAL WARRANTS ARE OUTSTANDING?**

The number changes daily, but we consistently have over 1,100 outstanding warrants\* that cannot be acted upon. These individuals are released onto our streets because there is no space in the jail.

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

#### **8. DURING A “TYPICAL MONTH” AT THE CURRENT JAIL, HOW MANY OF THE PEOPLE HOUSED ARE SERVING A JAIL SENTENCE, I.E., HAVE BEEN CONVICTED, AND HOW MANY ARE AWAITING TRIAL?**

On average, approximately 50-60% of inmates have been sentenced with the remainder waiting for trial.

#### **9. ARE INMATES CHARGED FOR THEIR STAY IN THE JAIL? WILL THAT RATE CHANGE WITH THE NEW JUSTICE COMPLEX?**

Inmates are charged \$30/day for room and board. Unfortunately, despite collection efforts, the collection rate is very low. The \$30 rate is in keeping with surrounding counties. Increasing the fee is a possibility that will be analyzed, but it is predicted that the collection rate would remain very low.

#### **10. HOW DOES THIS PROJECT TIE INTO THE STATE’S TASK FORCE STUDY THAT WAS RECENTLY RELEASED?**

The State of Michigan recently released a report on Pre-Trial Incarceration. 46th Circuit Court Judge George Mertz was one of fifteen judges asked to serve on the task force. Judge Mertz has firsthand insight into the information and recommendations that are part of the study.

The report’s findings are largely irrelevant to Otsego County’s situation for the following reasons:

The report detailed a study that was conducted to analyze the reasons and lengths of stay for inmates awaiting trial. The study focused on individuals who committed misdemeanors such as traffic crimes, failure to pay fines, theft, etc. The Otsego County jail hasn’t housed for these types of crimes in years. Our jail is full of felons or assaultive/violent misdemeanants because we have no room to incarcerate for “lesser” crimes.

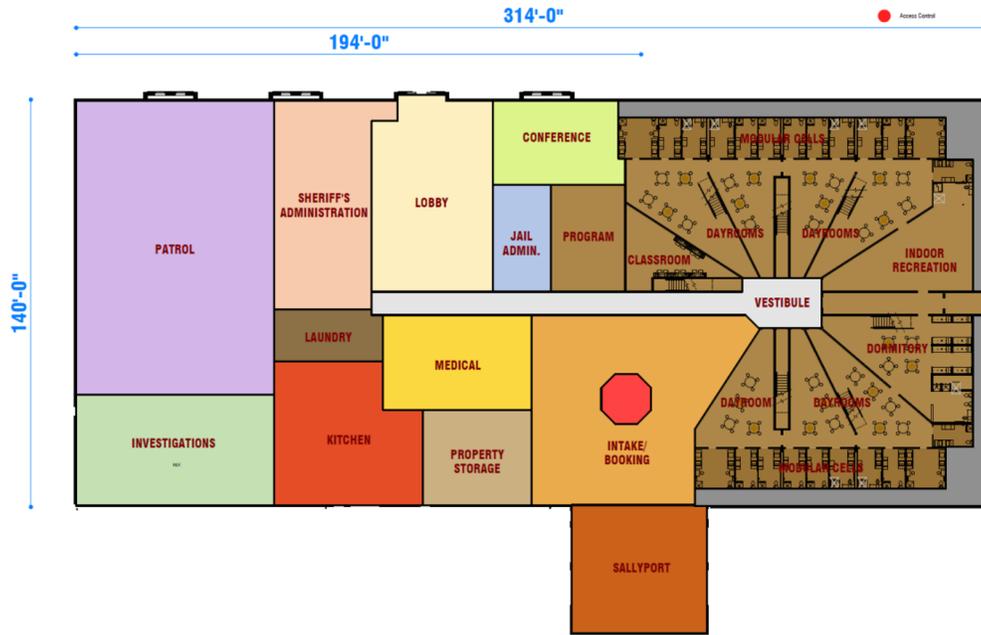
Judge Mertz affirmed that Otsego County already implemented the recommendations years ago, as a way of managing our overcrowding challenges. These programs include the Work Camp and Drug Court, but they are operating at their maximum capacity.

#### **11. HOW WILL THE JUSTICE COMPLEX POSITIVELY IMPACT OUR COMMUNITY?**

The Justice Complex will have multiple positive community impacts. An adequately sized jail will allow the 1,100 outstanding warrants to begin to be acted upon. Judges and prosecutors will be able to hold criminals accountable for their actions. Custodial parents will finally receive some of the much-needed financial support they have gone without. Drug and human traffickers will be deterred from operating in Otsego County.

This facility will provide law enforcement and court officials the ability to more effectively keep our streets safe and to protect the small town “up-north” character that keeps us and our families in this community and attracts newcomers.

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## 12. HOW DOES THIS IMPACT OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND OFFICERS?

Impacts on local law enforcement are numerous. A larger jail will allow our officers to enforce outstanding warrants and to arrest criminals who would otherwise be released due to lack of jail space. As stated by Frank Claeys, Chief of Police for the City of Gaylord, “the system we have now is effectively broken.” The facility will also provide a safer, more efficient work environment for our Correction Officers who currently face substantial challenges to effective inmate booking, transportation, and supervision.

## 13. HOW DOES THIS IMPACT OUR CORRECTION OFFICERS?

The primary benefit for the CO’s is increased safety. The current jail’s corridor-style layout (essentially a hallway with cells on either side) contains many blind spots that the camera systems can’t reach, so CO’s don’t know what they’re walking into. The proposed jail’s pod-style design eliminates the blind spots for better monitoring and safety. The entire jail, including all inmate cells, can be viewed from a central “command” center, allowing for more efficient and safer inmate supervision.

## SECTION III: THE JUSTICE COMPLEX PLAN

### 14. WHY A COMPLEX AND NOT JUST A JAIL?

To build only a new jail only and renovate existing court buildings would be costlier to taxpayers. Building a Justice Complex is 21% cheaper.\*

Otsego County’s judicial system also faces substantial facility challenges that must be addressed.

Currently, the District and Circuit Courts are located in separate buildings 1.3 miles apart. The Circuit Court is in the downtown County Building and the District Court is at the Alpine Center.

In 2016, the Michigan State Police, Department of Homeland Security, and our insurance provider conducted a security study that identified the two separate court locations as a major security risk to Otsego County staff and to the public. The study recommended moving the Circuit Court from the downtown County Building to the Alpine Center.

The Alpine Center, where the District Court and all court-related departments are housed, is an 83-year-old building originally designed as a tuberculosis sanatorium. This building requires \$10 million dollars in repair and maintenance work within the next 5 years to keep it operating at its current capacity.\* The \$10 million

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does not include improving courtroom security, and it does not include moving the Circuit Court as recommended – the \$10 million in repairs would simply keep the building usable for office and present courtroom needs.

Over \$100,000 is spent on utilities each year at the Alpine Center. Studies show that in a modern building of that size, we should be spending about half that amount. This results in inefficient spending of \$50,000 every year on utilities alone.

All this led us to ask the question: is spending \$10 million on repairs to an 83-year-old building the best use of taxpayer money?

Having the criminal justice system under one roof:

- Significantly reduces security risks and operational costs, and eliminates the need to repair the Alpine Center.
- Results in substantial increase in public convenience (a “one stop shop”) and reduces confusion regarding the location of the two courts.
- Improves public safety because we would no longer need to use deputies for transport, taking them away from their law enforcement duties and road patrol.
- Eliminates the need to move inmates out of the secure facility for transport and thereby increases public safety.

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

### **15. HOW BIG WILL THE JUSTICE CENTER BE? WHAT WILL IT INCLUDE?**

The Complex will include 41,467 square feet for the jail and Otsego County Sheriff’s Department and 25,119 square feet for the Circuit, District and Probate Courts’ courtrooms and offices, Friend of the Court, Prosecuting Attorney’s office, District Court probation and Circuit Court Probation/Parole offices, for a total building size of 67,879 square feet.

### **16. WHAT ARE THE ANNUAL TRANSPORTATION COSTS TO/FROM THE CURRENT JAIL AND COURT LOCATIONS? HOW MUCH STAFF TIME DOES IT TAKE?**

The Sheriff’s Department’s exact annual transportation costs to transport inmates back and forth from the jail to the Alpine Center has not been tabulated but is estimated to be substantial.

(For example, Antrim County’s 2019 Facility Master Planning study found that moving their current jail just 1.3 miles from their courts would increase staff and transportation cost by \$148,000 per year.)

In addition to the cost itself, there is a negative impact on public safety because using deputies for transporting prisoners takes them away from other law enforcement duties, including road patrol. Any time inmates are moved out of the secure facility location, it creates an inherent risk to public safety.

## OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A

### **17. WHAT ARE THE OPERATIONAL COST INCREASES OF GOING FROM A 34-BED TO A 120-BED JAIL, AND HOW WILL THOSE COSTS BE ADDRESSED?**

There are significant operational inefficiencies in the Alpine Center that would be addressed with the complex and result in cost savings, including:

- A significant reduction in inefficient spending on utilities.
- Reduction in security costs because we would have everything under one roof instead of having courtrooms split between two buildings.

There would be increased operating costs as a function of increasing the number of jail beds, including:

- We will need to hire additional corrections officers (CO's), as the number of inmates will increase. Safety standards recommend adding 5 CO's to the current staff of 11 CO's. It is important to note that even though the number of jail beds will almost triple, it is not necessary to triple the number of staff because the pod-style design is a very efficient way to monitor the cells, as opposed to the corridor-style design of the old jail.
- No additional court staff is anticipated to be needed right away. That being said, however, the building is designed to be of adequate size accommodate growth in both the jail and court system over the next 20 years.
- The additional corrections officer staffing and other operating costs of the new facility are already factored into the 1.95 mill request – no additional operational millage will be necessary.
- There will be other operational costs to consider such as more inmate meals, more janitorial supplies, etc.
- All additional operating costs are already included in the 1.95 mill request.\* We have also included a conservative inflation factor of 6% each year to make sure we are covered into the future. Therefore, a separate operational millage is not necessary.

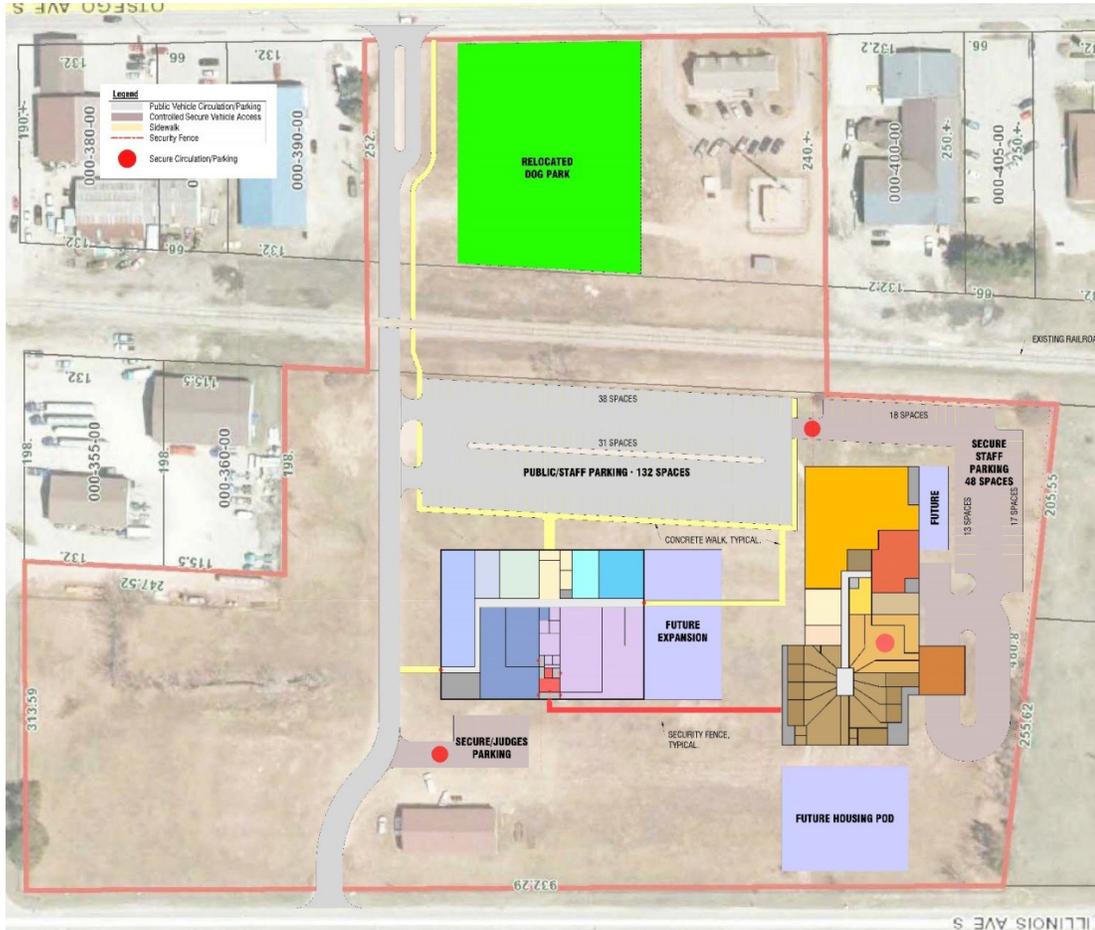
*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

### **18. WHERE WILL THE JUSTICE COMPLEX BE LOCATED?**

Pontresina Park on South Illinois Avenue was decided upon for the Justice Center location for a variety of reasons:

1. Otsego County already owns the property, so there is no expense in purchasing it.
2. The property is deed-restricted for government use only. It was formerly a DNR repair facility and was sold to Otsego County for \$1 with the understanding that it will only ever be used for government. If the County doesn't develop it the property will remain vacant.
3. The property is centrally located in Otsego County. This facilitates equal police response times to all Otsego County communities.
4. The property is in an area that has experienced significant blight in recent years. We hope to spur other development with the construction of this building. Growth in the City of Gaylord has been focused on the west side of town. The east side has seen relatively little growth in recent years. It is hoped that this building may breathe some life into the area and encourage local business growth.
5. The proposed use is compatible with surrounding land use and buffered from residential areas.
6. Utilities are available; city water and sewer are on site, as well as OC NET, the County's own broadband network.
7. The site is located close to the County Building. This facilitates ease of use by the public and by Otsego County employees.
8. There is ample room for future expansion on the site. Approximately 1-2 acres of vacant property to the south can be used for expansion if needed.
9. The Sheriff's Department must be in the county seat, which is the City of Gaylord. Therefore, the Justice Complex must be in the City of Gaylord.

# OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A



## 19. GIVEN THE PROPOSED LOCATION, WHAT IMPACTS/CHANGES WILL THERE BE TO THE DOG PARK?

The Dog Park will be moved to the old 911 property on S. Otsego Avenue just north of the library. All donated structures, shrubbery, etc. will be moved to the new location. The new dog park will be roughly the same size as it is currently. The new location is a more integral part of the community and has several advantages, such as better visibility, easier to find, and better parking. The Parks and Recreation Commission, Animal Control, and Friends for Life are supportive of this potential relocation.

## 20. BESIDES THIS PROPOSED JUSTICE COMPLEX, WHAT OTHER OPTIONS DID THE COUNTY CONSIDER? WHY IS THIS THE BEST OPTION?

The County considered several options in addition to the Justice Complex. These included adding on to the existing jail and downtown County Building, building only a jail and repairing/-adding-on to the Alpine Center, and housing additional prisoners

in neighboring county's jails. The most cost-effective and feasible solution to the problems currently faced by Otsego County is the Justice Complex.

## 21. THE LIBRARY IS SO CLOSE TO THE PROPOSED SITE. IS THAT SAFE?

Yes, studies show that having a strong law enforcement presence heightens public safety and security in that area. The Library Director is very thankful this site has been chosen for the Justice Complex and is a strong advocate.

## 22. WHY CAN'T WE JUST ADD A FEW MORE CELLS ONTO THE EXISTING JAIL LOCATION?

Adding on to the existing jail and court system at the downtown County Building would not be feasible for many reasons. Here are a few:

1. For an "apples to apples" building of similar square footage, additional stories would likely have to be added, making the

## OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A

jail the tallest building in town which could be a point of public contention;

2. The operational issues with trying to construct a jail on top of an existing jail (moving inmates, etc.);
3. There would be no room for future expansion;
4. Construction issues that could come to light as building progresses (i.e., change orders for unforeseen expenditures);
5. No room for additional needed parking; and
6. There are likely architectural/engineering issues that would make it very costly.

The jail feasibility study performed in 2006 looked into this option and included cost estimates to add-on existing beds to the downtown facility. Converting 2006 cost estimates to today's dollars results in an estimated project cost of \$31 million. This is more expensive than the \$30 million project proposed for a new complex, in addition to the several concerns listed above.

### **23. WHY NOT TAKE A REGIONAL/MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL APPROACH?**

We are legally required to have the jail at the County seat. In addition, a regional jail, while it makes sense in theory, is unfeasible to implement in practice. Annual transportation costs alone would be prohibitive and make the regional jail concept extremely unattractive. Antrim County recently had a jail study done which showed the annual increase in costs from transporting prisoners just 1.3 miles was \$148,000 per year.

Also, it is difficult to cost-share a regional facility with other jurisdictions because the cost on a per inmate basis varies widely from inmate to inmate. For example, inmate A may have a chronic medical condition that requires increased supervision and medical care. Inmate A would therefore cost much more on a per-day basis than inmate B who does not have such costs. The wide disparity of cost between inmates makes it difficult to settle on shared costs between jurisdictions.

### **24. THE NUMBER OF JAIL BEDS BEING PROPOSED IS ABOUT 30 MORE THAN RECOMMENDED FOR A COUNTY OUR SIZE, BASED ON OTSEGO'S POPULATION. WHY?**

The proposed number of beds in the Justice Complex addresses the needs of our community for the next 30-40+ years. We don't want to ask taxpayers for money today to build a jail that will be too small in 10 or 20 years and then be forced to reach out to the taxpayers again. Instead, we took a long-term approach, and the proposed complex is designed to meet the community's needs for the long run.

Otsego County's population is expected to grow in the next 30 years. Byce and Associates created 13 population projection models to come up with the 120-bed proposal.\* The county's current population is roughly 25,000. Dividing it by the proposed 120 beds results in a bed-per-1000-people ratio of 4.8. Otsego County's population in 30-years is projected to be 34,290. With the 120 beds proposed, that brings our beds-per-1000-people ratio to 3.5, the professionally recommended jail size, in line with the state average.

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

## **SECTION IV: THE MILLAGE REQUEST**

### **25. HOW MUCH IS THE MILLAGE?**

Voters will be asked to consider a 1.95 mill levy to fund the \$27 million project. The 1.95 mill request includes the cost to construct, equip, furnish, and operate the Justice Complex. There will not be an additional operating millage requested, as operating costs have already been figured into the 1.95 mill request.\*

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

### **26. WHEN WILL THE VOTE BE?**

August 4, 2020. That date was chosen because significant repairs will need to take place at the Alpine Center within 3-5 years. It will take 2-3 years to complete construction on the new Justice Complex, so from a timing standpoint, it was important to move forward with the August 4th election date.

## OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A

### 27. WHY IS A MILLAGE THE BEST OPTION TO ACCOMPLISH?

A millage is the only option to fund the Justice Complex because the county does not have the funds to accomplish this important project without a millage. If the county had funds to build a jail...we'd already have a new jail.

Three main financing options were considered for this project:

1. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers low-interest loans for jail/justice complex projects. In fact, Otsego County was preliminarily approved for a \$30 million loan, as the USDA analysts agreed with our dire need for a new complex.

This option was ruled out because even though the USDA interest rates are low, we can get lower rates on the competitive bond market due to Otsego County's excellent bond rating.

2. Public-Private Partnership (P3). P3 involves working with private developers to build the facility and then lease it back to the county.

This option was ruled out, as bonding was again the less expensive option. The developers we spoke to agree with us. This again results from the County's AA+ bond rating. A P3 would likely not be attractive to private developers at the interest rate the County would receive through a traditional bond issuance.

3. Traditional Public Bonding. Bonding is our best option because interest rates are determined on the open, competitive bond market. Because of Otsego County's excellent bond rating, AA+ (a bond rating is similar to a person's credit score), and because the county has very low debt, this is our best option for low interest rates. Our anticipated low interest rate is one of the reasons we were able to keep the millage rate down to 1.95.

### 28. WHAT IS THE COUNTY'S CURRENT BOND INDEBTEDNESS?

The County has a bonded indebtedness balance of \$1,410,528 as of 12/31/2019. There are two bonds outstanding – the University Center bond and the Library Expansion bond, both of which will be

paid off with the 2019 and 2021 millage collections, respectively.

The County's debt is very low, at less than 1% of the allowable limit. Even with the proposed Justice Complex debt, the County will be well below the maximum allowable debt limitations.\*

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

### 29. WHY CAN'T THE COUNTY APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDS (STATE/FEDERAL/OTHER) TO BUILD THIS?

There are no grant funds available for this purpose.

### 30. HOW DO WE STAND IN RANKING BASED ON TAX ASSESSMENTS PER COUNTY?

The proposed millage is a county-wide millage, so these comparisons are county-wide comparisons\*:

When comparing the total millage rates that municipalities in 11 surrounding counties levy to provide their governmental services, Otsego County ranks third lowest (9th out of 11). (Note: the term municipality includes all of the villages, townships, cities within each county.)

Each of the 11 counties has a different number of municipalities within it. For further analysis and in order to compare municipalities to one another, a median total millage rate was calculated for each municipality and added to the overall County millage rate. This calculation shows Otsego County still being ranked third lowest of the 11 counties.

And finally, because each of the counties has a different population, a calculation was performed to factor in the population of each municipality within each county. The result of this calculation provides an average millage rate paid per person. Otsego County's average taxation, based on millage rates and population levels, ranked fourth lowest compared to the other 11 county averages (8th out of 11).

The 11 counties used in the comparative calculations are: Antrim, Alpena, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Kalkaska, Montmorency, Roscommon, Wexford, and Otsego.

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

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### **31. WILL THERE NEED TO BE AN OPERATING MILLAGE?**

No. All costs are included in the 1.95 mills.

### **32. WHAT COSTS/EXPENSES WILL THE MILLAGE LANGUAGE ALLOW THE FUNDS RAISED TO BE USED FOR? HOW MUCH WILL THE OWNER OF A \$50,000 TAXABLE VALUE HOME PAY?**

As stated in the ballot language, the millage dollars will be used to construct, equip, furnish and operate the Justice Complex.

A household with a taxable value of \$50,000 can expect to pay \$8.13/month, \$1.88 per week, \$0.27 per day. That's per household, not per person, so if you have two adults in your household, divide those amounts in half for the cost per person.\*

Otsego County has 4 millages that between 2019- 2021 have either expired (and will not be renewed) or been significantly reduced. These tax reductions total .8858 mills, almost half the amount of the millage requested for the Justice Complex.\*

This savings would reduce the net effect to \$4.44 per month, \$1.03 per week, \$0.15 per day. Again, that's per household, not per person.\*

*\*See [www.otsegocountymi.gov](http://www.otsegocountymi.gov) for source information*

### **33. WHY DOES THE MILLAGE BALLOT INCLUDE MONEY BEING GIVEN TO DDA/TIF (DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY/ TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (DDA/TIF)? HOW MUCH WILL THEY GET?**

The DDA can "capture" a portion of the taxes levied. This does not increase the tax amount citizens pay. State law requires the county to pay the DDA/TIF capture, which is approximately \$7,500, or 0.4% of the total levied annually.

### **34. WE HAVE PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE TO PAY THEIR TAXES. HOW DO YOU EXPECT FOR CITIZENS TO PAY A HIGHER TAX?**

Providing a safe environment – for ourselves, our children, and generations to come – is the core function of government and an integral part of our community's mission. To continue attracting

living-wage jobs, more housing, and promoting tourism, we need to prioritize public safety.

The purpose of the Justice Complex is to increase the safety of Otsego County residents. Crime is expensive to its victims and to the community. The cost to victims of a criminal act, whether personal injury or property damage—medical costs, insurance costs, repair or replacement costs—would likely far exceed the household amount of the millage proposed for the Justice Complex.

### **35. ARE THERE ANY GRANTS TO HELP PAY FOR A NEW JUSTICE COMPLEX?**

There are no grants available for this kind of project.

## **SECTION V: OTHER INFORMATION**

### **36. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE ALPINE CENTER?**

During the planning and construction phases of the Justice Complex, the Alpine Center will still be occupied by Otsego County employees. After the Justice Complex is complete, the Alpine Center will be vacated. The court system will be relocated in the new Complex, and the non-court related departments (equalization, soil erosion, land use), will move to the existing downtown county building.

If voters approve the millage on August 4th, it will take 2-3 years before the new building is finished and we can empty the Alpine Center. We will take that time to analyze and gather community input on the best use of the Alpine Center building and property.

There are two options: 1) We will work with a developer to convert the Alpine Center into something that's compatible with the surrounding area and meets the needs of the community. Even though the building is in need of \$10 million in repair, research shows that it could cost over \$20 million to construct a building of that size and structure from scratch, so it may be an attractive option for a developer. Additionally, many grant options are available for development; or 2) If it is deemed best to demolish the building, demolition grant opportunities are also available. There is value in the property alone, even without the building.

To reiterate, the number one goal is to not spend any unnecessary taxpayer dollars at the facility.

## OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A

### **37. ARE THERE ANY OPPORTUNITIES THAT MIGHT DEVELOP WITHIN OTSEGO COUNTY SHOULD THE JUSTICE COMPLEX BE ESTABLISHED? (E.G. “ONE STOP SHOPPING” FOR VARIOUS COUNTY SERVICES.)**

There are many ancillary benefits to the Justice Complex plan. These include:

- Creating a central location for criminal justice services, law enforcement, and the jail streamlines operations, facilitates communication among agencies, and increases convenience to the public. There is constant confusion and inconvenience for those trying to locate the right courtroom and oftentimes they're in the wrong building. Few people want to be at Court in the first place and making the experience more convenient and less confusing can serve to de-escalate the tensions that are already present.
- Moving the jail, sheriff, and road patrol to the new Justice Complex would vacate space in the downtown County Building for Equalization, Planning and Zoning, Soil Erosion, and the Building Department, thus consolidating related services in one location. Currently, those departments are in separate buildings at the Alpine Center that are difficult to locate and very inconvenient.
- Vacating the aging Alpine Center will create an opportunity in that area that we wouldn't otherwise have. The path chosen, whether development or demolition, will be consistent with the education, housing, and healthcare uses of that area.
- Building the Justice Complex at the dog park location will develop an area in the City that hasn't been developed in a long time and could use a catalyst to rejuvenate it. It is hoped that the development of this parcel will help spur growth.

### **38. WILL THE COUNTY PARTNER WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE “ANCILLARY SERVICES” (FOR EXAMPLE FOOD SERVICES) THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED AT THE JUSTICE COMPLEX?**

We continually analyze whether partnerships, collaborations, or privatizing services would be more cost-effective than what we're doing internally. There are also strict requirements on preparation and delivery of food, and mandatory inspections that would drive up the cost of contracting out food service.

### **39. CAN WE OUTSOURCE ANY OF THE SERVICES, SUCH AS FOOD SERVICES?**

Unfortunately, no. There are specific Michigan Department of Correction requirements that must be met for all inmate services. In addition, outsourcing in many cases is too costly.

Our analyses consistently show that our internal inmate food service program is the least expensive option.

### **40. WILL ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE SHERIFF'S WORK CAMP AND THE DRUG COURT STILL BE NEEDED IF THE JUSTICE COMPLEX IS ESTABLISHED? WHY?**

Yes, they will still be needed. The Sheriff's Work Camp and the Drug Court are restorative justice programs used as an alternative to jail time for misdemeanants. They are successful programs that would continue to operate in the community.

### **41. IS THERE A PLAN B IF THIS FAILS?**

Not at this time. This has been determined to be the most efficient and cost-effective option by Byce and Associates.

### **42. WHEN WILL THE NEW COMPLEX BE READY?**

The Justice Complex will take approximately 8-12 months to design and bid, and another 16-18 months to construct. The total time between the millage passing and the building being occupied is estimated to take roughly 2-3 years.

### **43. WHO IS BUILDING THE JUSTICE COMPLEX?**

That has not yet been determined. In order to move forward with specific design and construction professionals, the millage needs to be approved by the voters first.

### **44. WILL THE JUSTICE COMPLEX HOUSE PEOPLE FROM OUT OF THE COUNTY?**

The jail is being built to suit Otsego County's needs, not to "overbuild" to accommodate inmates from other areas. We do not want to ask Otsego County's taxpayers for funds to build a jail to house prisoners from other counties; we want to use our dollars to solve our problems, not subsidize the housing of other counties' inmates.

## **OTSEGO COUNTY JUSTICE COMPLEX Q&A**

The county could house inmates from other counties for a fee, but this doesn't end up generating the revenues to offset the costs. Discussions with several sheriff and jail administrators from other counties reveal that it's not profitable, and it adds significantly to the liability exposure of the jail and the county. If we have a few spare beds at some point in the future, we can analyze the situation further. However, the priority is to address the needs of our community first and foremost.

### **45. WHAT WILL THE IMPACT ON THE SECURITY STAFF BE?**

A complex that has all courtrooms and criminal justice departments of the county under one roof will streamline staffing and increase efficiency. It will save money and will effectively eliminate the need to use road patrol deputies to provide courtroom security and transportation, so they can then focus on community law enforcement needs.

### **46. WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON SERVICES?**

#### **A. MENTAL HEALTH?**

In the current jail, there is no room to properly segregate inmates by custody level – meaning, serious offenders could share a cell with less serious offenders. We are currently unable to separate inmates based on age or those with mental health issues. Community Mental Health provides a mental health liaison to assess the mental health of inmates, but there is no room to properly separate those who have mental health issues.

#### **B. LIFE SKILL CLASSES**

The Justice Center will have space to provide various classes for inmates to increase their life skills.

### **47. WHY SHOULD I PAY FOR INMATES TO HAVE AIR CONDITIONING?**

The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) requires a minimum temperature range for a correctional facility. Air conditioning is the most practical solution to this requirement. It doesn't make operational sense to keep bringing in fans, etc. and if we can't keep the building within the temperature requirements we would then have to move inmates or open ourselves up to liability. Air conditioning increases building longevity in that it reduces humidity which would otherwise promote rust and deterioration of equipment and provides a healthier working environment for employees.

### **48. WHY SHOULD I PAY FOR INMATES TO BE COMFORTABLE IN A COUNTRY CLUB OR TAJ MAHAL ATMOSPHERE?**

The space per inmate in each cell will remain the same, but there will be more cells so we can improve our community's safety. The cells in the new facility will be built to minimum Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) statewide requirements. The jail cells will still be "bare bone" cells with cement floors, as they are currently. Inmates will still sleep in metal bunk beds with economy-grade mattresses and pillows.